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on human rights of migrants
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Report of the Secretary-General

ANNEX

Submission from the Human Rights Advocates
dated 30 January 1998

GE.98-10380

RESPONSE TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF MIGRANTS

First of all, I would like to call the attention of this Committee to the fact that the Philippines is basically a country of emigration. Although a number of foreigners are in the country, and some in an irregular situation, the most pressing issue in regard to the Philippines is the migrants who go abroad. For figures concerning foreigners in the country, please refer to the statistics provided by the government. In fact, although there was a regularization program which ended last year, the government has not released detailed figures on the number of foreigners who have regularized their situation. It is estimated that some of them still remain in an irregular situation in the Philippines, but again estimates are just guesses.

As for statistics on Filipinos abroad, again please refer to the figures provided to you by the Government agencies, since they are the source for those statistics. The overall number of 6.5 million Filipinos abroad might be overestimated in our opinion, since the number of overseas contract workers should not be higher than 1.5 million, and the number of irregular migrants (1.8 million) is just an estimate.

In terms of measures being taken for the protection of rights of Filipinos, the implementation of the provisions of the Migrants Act of 1995 is most relevant. However, such implementation is still lacking in many aspects, as the enclosed table indicates.

To raise the awareness on the human rights of migrants, the Scalabrini Migration Center organized an international conference in 1992: Human Rights of Migrant Workers: Agenda for NGOs. The proceedings of that conference were published by the Scalabrini Migration Center.

In addition to government activities, let me bring to your attention activities undertaken by NGOs, in particular the Philippine Migrant Rights Watch (PMRW), which convenes at the Scalabrini Migration Center and of which I am the Secretary. On December 18, 1997 PMRW, in cooperation with the Asian Partnership in International Migration (APIM), the UNDP and ILO launched the International Day of Solidarity with Migrants. The day was selected because it is the day in which the United Nations adopted the Migrant Convention. It is our hope that the United Nations will proclaim officially December 18 as International Day of Solidarity with Migrants. On the occasion, a poster and a booklet were prepared as advocacy and educational instruments for the promotion of the rights of migrants (see encl.)

I do not have specific information on episodes of racism and xenophobia in the Philippines against foreigners or abroad against Filipinos.

The Philippines has already ratified the 1990 Migrant Convention in 1995. I am not aware of any action been taken to ratify ILO Conventions 97 and 143.

Graziano Battistella
Director
Scalabrini Migration Center